

## **ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract**

*Education accountability defines the learning system in India; it indulges Administrators, Parents, trustee, Panchayat Sarpanch, Local Bodies and teachers. They have expressed great concerns about the insufficient Educational System in Indian and examination system. Now the time has come to rethink and renovate the education system so that the future generation is fruitful in the way towards the betterment of the society.*

*Also from the great thinkers and educationalists it is mentioned several time that if we follow the same trend then the new innovative theories could not be developed among the students. It is therefore necessary to optimize the students and make them capable so that they can come up with the new ideas and can implement the same. In the present scenario it is hard to attain the new thinking which can enhance the kids in a fruitful manner. For such an efficient system the accountability checks and control on each and every part is too important in order to successes in new idea. For implementation it becomes necessary to set goals and the path may be found out to attain them and to implement it with all the efforts. The system should be well adaptive at all the levels and the accountability is set so as to attain the goals. This paper is moreover the overview to manage the education system. Government Accountability Act is designed to help the government manage the various sectors within its mandate, the education system being one of them. Government requires that the ministry and school boards answer for how well they carried out their responsibilities, and our Education has chosen to use student assessment results in core subjects extensively for its reporting. Because the ministry and school boards do not actually deliver education to students, and because student achievement is affected by many variables and over long periods of time, the ministry and, in turn, school boards exert systemic pressures on teachers and school administrators and make directions to get improved test results. Following are some of the areas where improvements could be made, which would result in a more effective accountability system.*

**Key Words:** Accountability in Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

Assessment that addresses the full range of education goals many members of the public are unaware that provincial examinations and tests, although of high technical quality, have limited validity in terms of measuring achievement of the goals of education. They do not know that the tested parts of the core courses of mathematics, science, social science and arts are a fraction of the skill and knowledge students need to learn. Values and predispositions they need to develop to be happy and productive members of society.

Provincial assessments cannot measure such areas as students' ability to speak clearly, accurately, manages time and other resources to complete a task and persistence. In addition to assessing achievement of a limited number of goals, provincial assessments today are designed only for some students, primarily those with academic capacity. Yet we know that book learning, while very important in a knowledge society, represents a very narrow span of children's gifts, talents and potential, and that society is more dependent than ever on a citizenry with a wide array of skills, knowledge and attitudes. A Professor said this about schooling: "We ought to be providing environments that enable each youngster in our schools to find a place in the educational sun. But when we narrow the program so that there is only a limited array of areas in which assessment occurs and performance is honored, youngsters whose aptitudes and interests lie elsewhere are going to be marginalized in our schools.

The danger lies in the use of limited data generated from narrow provincial assessments to support policy decisions that fail to consider the complexity of schooling and the diversity of students served. By focusing on limited data, the system fails to include all children and to support the achievement of the more profound, broader education goals. The measures used in education accountability system could be reviewed for inclusion of the full range of education goals to avoid this pitfall.

Quality standards implemented, not standardization Standards-based reform is intended to focus efforts at all levels in the education system on clearly articulated outcomes, theoretically permitting educators and policy- makers to use alternative ways of achieving the desired levels of learning. However, Indian accountability system is driven by provincial assessments that, while limited in scope, are nonetheless powerful in focusing attention. The assessments define not only what outcomes are to be achieved but also how they will be achieved, because curricula, methods of instruction, school programs and district-wide approaches have become standardized throughout the province. Care must be taken to ensure that the capacity of education partners to be responsive to the diverse needs of schools, their students and their communities is not diminished or opportunities to find better ways of doing things are not limited through standardization. Students with disabilities, roughly 8% of the population, must have an Individualized Program Plan.

The placement of students with special needs in regular classrooms is based on the principles of equity, sharing, participation and the worth and dignity of all people. As the individual needs of each student are the primary focus in providing an education, so must be the method of evaluation and reporting of achievement.

Standardized tests measure how well students in regular, core academic programs master provincial learning outcomes. They are not valid measures of the achievement of students with special needs, so some other means is needed to ensure that these students are not ignored by the system. Many believe that every student is unique and has preferred styles of learning that may not match the approaches used on standardized tests. Standardized testing is designed to ignore or override external factors affecting individuals, such as poverty; parents' educational level; mental, physical and emotional health; the effects of racial and other forms of discrimination;

and language of origin during measurement. The accountability system could address these factors at various stages of data gathering, reporting and reviewing. Standardized testing also affects accountability system. When students focus on achieving high test scores, they are less likely to learn to their capacity, love learning and value creative thinking, accept mistakes as a normal part of learning and develop their unique learning styles. Many students, even at a very young age, experience unnecessary stress when writing tests. Research has shown that children under stress do not learn well.

Alternative forms of assessing students' levels of achievement and progress could be used in the system. Extensive research has been conducted on the use of assessments based on a standards approach in which a broad range of assessment tasks and responses are possible. Research shows that when performance assessments rather than paper-and-pencil tests are used, teacher practice improves, student learning deepens and results are easily reported.

Many have been led to believe that test results provide real, accurate and conclusive information about what is going on in schools and the system overall, and naively believe that if scores are high, no serious problems exist. An opportunity exists to help the public understand that test results alone give an incomplete and sometimes inaccurate picture. Authorities should be made aware that a school that offers outstanding programs in the arts or vocational programs may not score high in provincial tests yet excel in meeting the needs of their community.

After looking closely at results on the Program for International Student Assessment for 15-year-olds, analysts found that Student's performance was actually 5<sup>th</sup> rather than 1<sup>st</sup> in nation. Simple rankings are often misleading. Although the ministry policy does not support the ranking of schools using provincial assessment results, the Institute and others are permitted to regularly publish school and district rankings widely. Ranking schools exerts pressure on programs to match to what is narrowly measured by the tests; this practice of ranking has the effect of limiting the curriculum, undermining school climate, diminishing community confidence and support, and disregarding the intents and efforts of parents, students and teachers in the school. Many students are unable to contribute fully in regular classrooms and may be debarred from provincial assessments to protect them from harm. A shift in accountability is needed from a system that is seen as "harmful" to some students to one that meaningfully includes all students and provides constructive and full information to teachers, students and parents.

### **EMERGING DIRECTIONS IN ACCOUNTABILITY**

Current research and events in education propose the following positive emerging directions: Increasing interest in the broader goals of education. Business and community leaders agree with educators that the needs of our children and youth would be better served by a broad base of learning that goes beyond basic core subjects. The complexities of 21st-century society and the unpredictability of the forces acting upon it require citizens to become more engaged in democratic institutions, as the countervailing tendencies toward individualism and alienation are

strong. Increasingly, business and community leaders recognize the role of learning and capacity building in a knowledge economy. The accountability process engages all the education partners in learning and in building their capacity to support the education goals. Research literature points out that education partners need to improve their accountability skills and knowledge if they are to be effective contributors in a shared, two-way system. Then, both external and internal processes can provide opportunities for all education partners to fully understand and build capacity in the system. Computer technology today enables data from a complex system to be recorded, managed and reported easily without undermining the credibility of the information. This is possible as long as measurement instruments and processes are unfailingly transparent, accurate and defensible in presenting the whole story on the achievement of education goals. The Super-Net can enable increased sharing and reporting of complex information.

Current research literature, however, refers to a shared responsibility not only among educators and students but also among school administrators, school boards, parents, local bodies and the government. Because these partners have diverse responsibilities, it is vital to be clear about who is accountable to whom, for what and under what circumstances. The responsibility for student learning and overall education quality needs to be shared by the education partners.

Government is accountable for providing the necessary funding and policy decisions to support schools and boards in delivering education to students. Measuring what we value. Educators know about the power of feedback or measurement in directing learning. Therefore, in implementing accountability systems, we must learn to assess what we value rather than valuing what we can assess easily.

Extensive research has been conducted on the use of performance based assessment such as portfolios, laboratory experiments, small-group reports and oral presentations, which provides a broader measure of student achievement and is more valid than paper-and-pencil tests. Such alternatives are available for careful consideration. However, measuring what we value needs to focus on the process of learning, including the process of analyzing student responses and using the results to develop pedagogy and improve practice.

Research literature shows that effective accountability systems encourage education partners to go beyond mere compliance with requirements. Commitment to the program or innovation is critical to success. Education partners expect meaningful involvement in decisions regarding goal setting and the design of the accountability process.

Research shows, that the teaching profession is willing to participate in an accountability system that recognizes and builds on teachers' pedagogical knowledge, skills and commitment to students.

## CONTEXT FOR AN EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

In order to develop a more dynamic and responsive vision of accountability, it is helpful to take a systemic view first, and then tackle the bits and pieces that make up the whole. **Where we are now? Where do we want to go?**

A primary reason for this collapse is a decreased sense of community caused by people spending less face-to-face time with each other. As communities have stretched, we've replaced community accountability through a shared culture—that is, the things we believe we agree upon with contracts defined and imposed by outsiders. When these contracts have value, they diminish trust within communities; they lead to a sad and empty life. Trust has been replaced with written performance standards, standardized tests, managerial supervision, and government requirements and legislation. The Program Integrity axis represents the array of education goals and the extent to which the accountability system supports them. When the education partners, the processes and the products in the system all support the attainment of the broad goals of education, we have a high level of Program Integrity. The history of accountability and current concerns explains how disconnected the provincial assessment programs and the accountability processes are from supporting the desired goals. The use of large-scale, high-stakes testing in Indian schools does not cohere with the principles of professional learning communities. The focus on increasing test scores in core subjects is incompatible with action research, collaborative inquiry and other forms of critical reflection.

**Four Possible Perspectives:** the construct presents the following four perspectives on accountability in education, none of which alone adequately portrays the accountability system in India.

**A:** Accountability is irregular and in the form of reporting on a partial set of outcomes that a specific school or school board project or initiative was established to achieve. This form of accountability highlights the unique achievements of the project or initiative as separate from other contributors to the effectiveness of the education system. Often such innovations survive only for as long as they are singled out for attention, and fail to be integrated into the education system as a whole or to contribute to the system's overall effectiveness in the end.

**B:** Accountability is top-down and centrally imposed to impel the system toward a limited set of specific outcomes, often selected learning in core subjects. While this form of accountability is system-wide, it is focused on a narrow interpretation of the goals of education. This perspective is best exemplified by the roots of the accountability movement in India in the late 80s and early 90s, when provincial assessments were seen as highly desirable because they focused the attention of the public and educators on a limited set of learning that were often called the basics.

**C:** this view supports centrally imposed comprehensive accountability as a means of directing the entire education system toward achievement of a broad range of outcomes. Some of the decisions taken recently by the government suggest movement in this direction. The relationship between the education partners, however, is largely defined by compliance with provincial requirements or directions as in the traditional, hierarchical notion of accountability, and the form of measurement remains dominated by highly controlled.

**D:** Leadership is shared amongst the education partners. Each partner is respected for the contribution it makes to education and is held responsible for how well its contribution supports the attainment of the broad goals of education. Each of the education partners is fully engaged in the accountability system, and flexibility is encouraged to ensure that long-term capacity building takes place. In addition to a common foundation of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the education system enables a diversity of outcomes that recognize and encourage a wide array of students' gifts, talents and potential. The metrics for assessment are designed to sustain diversity in programs. Assessment is viewed as for learning, rather than the current preoccupation with assessment of learning. In summary, while each of the four may present both attractive and problematic features, the intent is to move our conception of accountability to a preferred state, one that the education partners believe will enable the education system to sustain improvement over the coming years.

### **KEY PRINCIPLES OF AN EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM**

The following seven principles are presented as a foundation for reflecting on and improving the current accountability system.

**Principle 1** Education partners have a shared understanding of and commitment to fairness, openness, respect for diversity and stewardship, key values underlying accountability in education. The education system operates within the context of a democratic society. It is purposeful in serving the education needs of children and youth and of society in general. The system operates effectively because the education partners who contribute in specific and unique ways hold similar values. In order for the education partners to trust each other and respond wholeheartedly to the issue of accountability, they reconfirm with each other a shared understanding and commitment to values such as the following:

**Fairness:** the rules are clear to everyone. They are applied consistently. Everyone has to follow the same rules. Performance goals are fair for everyone.

**Openness:** the education partners together set guidelines for annual plans and reports that include accountability for both processes and results. The process of learning is openly displayed. Assessments are interpreted and evaluated for their effectiveness in leading to valuable learning goals and responsiveness to individual student learning styles and needs.

**Respect for Diversity/Equal Educational Opportunity:** Every student has particular learning needs. Every student has particular aptitudes that deserve to be developed. Assessments are designed to gather information on the progress of all students. Each school and school jurisdiction responds in unique ways to the needs of the students and community it serves.

**Resources:** Responsible use of available resources is made. Sufficient resources are allocated to accomplish education goals. The system enables responsive and responsible practice, which includes teacher knowledge, school improvement and problem solving, local flexibility in meeting the actual needs of real students, shared ethical commitment by everyone and appropriate public policy structures that encourage, not punish, an inclusive education system. By working from this base of shared values, education partners become comfortable in going beyond mere compliance with imposed requirements to commitment to fulfilling their respective roles and responsibilities.

**Principle 2** the purpose of accountability in education is to support the broad goals of education and the diverse learning needs of children and youth. In order to enjoy continued support from those it serves, the education system shows students, parents and the public that it is achieving the goals set for it. The education system recognizes and advances the differing gifts, talents and potential that child and youth possess, from which society ultimately benefits, and the different rates of learning. The education partners are sensitive to the fact that accountability processes provide powerful feedback mechanisms to affect the perceptions and behaviors of those internal and external to the education system. More important, however, accountability provides valuable information to the education partners for improving the contexts, inputs, processes and outcomes of the education system and enables the system to achieve its goals. The goals of education are broad and long-term, and reflect the diversity of society. This means that information gathered and reported through the accountability system must also be broadly based and include results on the full range of performance measures, not only academic achievement. Assessments whether at the classroom level or not, reflect the diversity of student aptitudes and rates of learning. The system respects the learning of students identified with a special education need by increasing expectations for these students while respecting the individualized nature of their learning ability. As some of the goals are long-term and realized over time, and children and youth develop at different rates, meaningful achievement may not be immediately apparent. Some means of capturing long-term results is used as well.

**Principle 3** Information for accountability purposes is gathered in a variety of ways from all relevant sources, and reported and used in ways that respect the limitations of the data. Through the accountability system, education partners gather and report timely and useful information that goes far beyond provincial testing. The information is clear and easy to understand. Multiple measures that provide information on both process and results are used. Processes are transparent. Measures that assess student learning allow for the diversity of student interest,

aptitude and rate of development. Information that is gathered from education partners is relevant to their roles and responsibilities and ultimately helpful in improving the system's capacity to achieve the goals of education. Therefore, the education partners make decisions together about priority areas for data collection and reporting, and the tools and processes needed. Mechanisms for gathering and reporting information are selected in terms of the purpose for which they are intended. Care is taken to ensure that the information gathered and reported is accurate and valid, and that any inferences or conclusions about the education system in whole or in part are discussed by the partners prior to reporting.

**Principle 4** Each education partner is accountable for those areas of the system within its authority and expertise. The accountability system is committed to distributing leadership throughout education in order to improve learning opportunities for students. Education partners observe accountability processes afar their monitoring functions and focus on helping schools build capacity for improvement within the context of the local communities they serve. Each education partner brings a particular perspective and understanding to the system of accountability. Earning opportunities provided at school; learn as much as possible. Support and care for each other during the learning process, share ideas and build on each other's ideas; help to build a community of learners. Parent Responsibilities Recognize their parental responsibilities in the education of their children. Assert their rights to have access to a high-quality education for children. Support the work of the school council. Participate in the election of school trustees. Insist on transparency and genuine consultation on decisions related to the school, school district and provincial learning system. Teacher Responsibilities Provide learning opportunities for all students through quality teaching practice. Continually improve instructional practice to enhance learning for students. Be responsible for student assessment and evaluation that leads to high standards of learning for each student. Be an engaged and reflective professional in the learning community. Recognize and demonstrate professionalism by making informed judgments that will lead to high standards of learning for each student. Enhance the profession by maintaining high standards of practice and conduct. Principal Responsibilities (in addition to their teacher responsibilities) Provide leadership in optimizing teachers' and support staff's capacity to meet the learning needs of students. Ensure that school organization and administration are based on collegial, collaborative and sound pedagogical practices. Prepare school development plans that reflect school– community contexts and the necessary financial and human resources to achieve the learning needs of students.

Teachers' Association Responsibilities Assume responsibility for ethical conduct in terms of the Code of Professional Conduct and standards of professional practice, as determined by the teaching Quality Standard, through practice review. Provide professional services to members and education partners that assist school communities in improving learning opportunities for students. Actively support the improvement of instructional practice and educational leadership through ongoing professional development. Foster principled social and community partnerships in order to advocate for children.

**Principle 5** Accountability in education enhances the capacity of education partners to fulfill their respective roles and responsibilities and leads to sustained improvement of the system. Education partners can be accountable only if they have the capacity to cause a mandated result. This principle means that each of the partners is challenged to become fully aware of and seeks to enhance its knowledge and skills, the technical and financial resources, the autonomy to act, and the know-how to integrate all the resources needed to bring about the result.

**Principle 6** Sound educational research and practice guide the design and implementation of an accountability system in education. Accountability in education requires a complex system of many processes and interdependent variables that, when designed and implemented well, enhance the system's opportunities to achieve the goals of education. Sound education research and practice guide the design and implementation of accountability. Opportunities are built into the system to review practices in light of new research. The teaching profession works with education partners in the effective use of the research, because pedagogy, rather than political ideology, and applying research in education.

**Principle 7** the system of accountability in education is evaluated on an ongoing basis. All education partners review the various aspects of the accountability system and reflect on its processes, the guiding principles and any opportunities for improving the system. This review occurs informally on an ongoing basis and formally every five years.

## SUMMARY

This paper presents an analysis of the meaning of accountability and the problems that have arisen in education as a result. Against a backdrop of static economy, dramatic shifts in population and growth, environmental and resource decreased, and a host of unforeseen global forces, Indians in the 21st century have been looking to education to help ensure a progressive and prosperous province. A hierarchical accountability system can only stand in the way. Today, leaders in business, the community and education agree that students must recognize the complexity in problems and solutions, focus on increasing dissatisfaction in people and institutions, use decentralization and experimentation to search for possible solutions. We agree that the education system must embrace complexity and develop ways of measuring student learning that go beyond simplistic pencil-and- paper tests. So that they can lead to innovative learning and develop in them better thinking for the future world to compete with.

The teaching profession is also concerned that government presents no opportunity for the partners to review the accountability system or the problems associated with its over-

dependence on assessments. This paper also provides a list of some promising directions in accountability and proposes some fundamental principles that could be used as a discussion starter for the education partners. In the spirit of emerging notions of shared accountability and capacity building, the teaching profession invites education partners and the ministry to engage in a review of the accountability system and make improvements that will enable the education system to meet the learning needs of our children and youth in the 21st century. So that they can think positively towards the innovative learning and to mobilize towards the learning and developing of new techniques to be developed over a period of time. Accountability is an essential precondition of any sustained human relationship. In Western democratic societies over the past 20 years or so, governments have tended to apply a particular notion of accountability to respond to the public's concerns about the effective use of tax dollars. In this context, accountability has come to mean the requirement of a public body to answer for the use of public funds, the performance of public duties or the achievement of anticipated results. Accountability therefore is generally understood in terms of four questions: **1.** who is held accountable? **2.** to whom? **3.** for what? **4.** And by what means? In this sense, accountability is a necessary feature of public education and, indeed, helps to keep the "public" in schooling. In the framework, once government direction is provided, the cycle of ministry and school board planning, budgeting, assessing, reporting and improvement spins only one way. The framework speaks primarily of increased results or movement toward numeric targets, not of inputs or capacity that would enable public education to produce improved results or make qualitative improvements. Early meaning of accountability that come from a power and control tradition are being broadened today because the one-way, top-down type of accountability has failed to engage, beyond mere compliance, those groups who actually implement the policy directive or program. In such education accountability systems, key stakeholders are likely to feel alienated, the full set of goals of education is not measured, and the opportunities for making deep, lasting improvements to the system are limited.

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